

## Booker Award

*To the Editor of "The Bookseller"*

Sir,—An otherwise very fair account of this year's Booker Prize (*The Bookseller*, 25th April) was to my mind marred at the end by two fatuous quotes from two apparently fatuous publishers.

“stiff-collared publisher wondered whether much publicity could really have been expected from an event geared to a panel including a venerable dame, a lady, and a professor, and which, in its two-year history, has already established a tradition of being chaired by a literary editor of a newspaper”. Was something so patently and idiotically slanted worth quoting? There is no counter-balancing mention in the account of the fact that each of the judges were chosen because of their broad intellectual sweep and their distinguished con-

nection with literature. They were indeed chosen as a quite varied group of people who could be relied upon to make a deeply perceptive and wise choice of the best novel to have been published in 1969.

What incidentally is wrong with "a venerable dame, a lady, a professor and a literary editor" (why was "a bookseller" left out of the list)? Anyone can play at compiling such a list and I wonder what the "stiff-collared publisher's" would have been: a dustman, a policeman, an ad-man and a barman?

You then go on to quote a publisher with a "softer collar" who observed that "when he had asked his taxi driver to bring him to Stationers' Hall he had been told that it was 'the first time in 13 years of taxi-driving I have ever been asked to go there'. It seemed to this publisher to be significant." Again, how fatuous can one be? It is a misfortune for that taxi driver to have been at his job for 13 years without having taken a client to one of the finest of the City's halls. My experience was different: when I had arrived somewhere in Newgate, I asked a taxi driver how to get to the Stationers' Hall and he gave me minute, correct and easy instructions.

To end your account of this important literary event on such a blatantly "knocking" note does no credit to *The Bookseller*.

I must declare my interest: I was one of the representatives of the Publishers Association—together with Mr. Mark Longman and Mr. Tom Maschler—who helped to choose the panel of judges.

Yours faithfully,  
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*Managing Director.*

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